

Message Text

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42

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 SSC-01 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02

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USIA-06 OMB-01 ACDA-05 /083 W

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R 081507Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4252

DIA WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD UNN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 5913

3.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PGOV LE

SUBJECT: SEVEN GOL CABINET MINISTERS RESIGN -- SORT OF

REF: (A) BEIRUT 5753; (B) BEIRUT 5611

1. FIRST COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING HELD HERE SINCE APRIL 17
CEASEFIRE RESULTED IN SIX PHALANGIST AND ALLIED MINISTERS
TENDERING THEIR RESIGNATIONS TO PRES FRANGIE (FBIS JN 072021),
DESPITE EARLIER ASSURANCES GIVEN TO PRESS BY PRIMIN SOLH THAT
NO "CONFRONTATION" WOULD TAKE PLACE AND THAT CABINET WOULD
CONFINE ITS DELIBERATIONS TO NORMAL BUSINESS MATTERS. A
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SEVENTH MINISTER, TASHNAG (ARMENIAN) PARTY'S SOUREN KHANAMIRIAN,

REPORTEDLY INDICATED "ORALLY" HIS INTENTION TO RESIGN HIS TOURISM PORTFOLIO ALSO.

2. ABOVE DEVELOPMENT COMES AS NO PARTICULAR SURPRISE, DESPITE PRIMIN SOLH'S CONSTANT EFFORTS OVER PAST TWO WEEKS TO RESTORE SOME SEMBLANCE OF HARMONY AMONG CONTENDING FACTIONS (PHALANGIST VS. "JUMBLATTIS") WITHIN CABINET AND ENABLE HIS GOVT TO CONTINUE IN OFFICE. PRES FRANGIE WAS ALREADY HOLDING RESIGNATIONS OF BOTH PHALANGIST MINISTERS AS WELL AS THOSE OF BOTH "JUMBLATTIST" MINISTERS (MINECONOMY KHALAF AND MINFINANCE KHALED JUMBLATT), BUT HE HAD "FROZEN" ACTION ON THEM APPARENTLY IN HOPE THAT CABINET CRISIS COULD SOMEHOW BE AVOIDED. THIS OBVIOUSLY HAS NOT BEEN POSSIBLE, AND GENERAL EXPECTATION NOW IS THAT PRIMIN SOLH WILL BOW TO THE INEVITABLE AND TENDER HIS OWN RESIGNATION TO PRES FRANGIE TOMORROW.

3. WE UNDERSTAND PRES FRANGIE AND PHALANGIST LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL HAD ORCHESTRATED DEVELOPMENTS AT YESTERDAY CABINET MEETING THROUGH ADVANCE CONSULTATIONS. FRANGIE REPORTEDLY OPENED MEETING WITH TOUGH STATEMENT BEMOANING SECURITY CONDITIONS IN LEBANON AND PROMISING TO STRIKE ALL TROUBLEMAKERS AND SUBVERSIVE ELEMENTS WITH "IRON FIST." PHALANGIST MINISTERS FOLLOWED WITH EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT, COMBINED WITH BITTER DIATRIBES AGAINST PRIMIN SOLH FOR "DERELICTION" OF HIS RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAINTAINING LAW AND ORDER AND AGAINST LEFTISTS AND FEDAYEEN FOR PLUNGING LEBANON INTO CHAOS AND STRIFE. THEY THEN FORMALLY TENDERED THEIR RESIGNATIONS, IN WHICH THEY WERE JOINED BY THREE CHAMOUNIST MINISTERS AND DRUZE MINHEALTH MAJID ARSLAN. MEETING THEN ENDED WITHOUT FURTHER ADO.

4. COMMENT: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT IS ANYONE'S GUESS. CONFLICTING REPORTS ARE CIRCULATING TO EFFECT (A) THAT PRES FRANGIE HAS ALREADY FORMULATED NEW CABINET UNDER ONE OF VARIOUS HOPEFULS NOTED PRA 2 REFTTEL B AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO DECREE DISSOLUTION OF SOLH CABINET AND APPOINTMENT OF SUCCESSOR TEAM IN SHORT ORDER, AND (B) THAT HE IS ACTUALLY IN QUANDARY OVER WHOM TO SELECT AND WILL ASK SOLH AND HIS MINISTERS TO REMAIN AS CARE-TAKERS PENDING COMPLETION OF FURTHER CONSULTATIONS WITH "LOYAL" PARLIAMENTARY AND OTHER POLITICAL LEADERS OVER SELECTION OF ANOTHER CABINET TEAM. (WE NEVER CEASE TO MARVEL AT MANNER IN WHICH LEBANESE GOVTS FALL
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WITHOUT EVER ACTUALLY LOSING MAJORITY SUPPORT IN PARLIAMENT, A PHENOMENON WHICH SUGGESTS HOW IRRELEVANT THAT BODY HAS BECOME IN STRANGE WORLD OF LEBANESE INTERNAL POLITICS.) WHOEVER FRANGIE COMES UP WITH TO REPLACE PRIMIN SOLH IS LIKELY TO FACE FURTHER CABINET DIVISIONS STEMMING FROM CONTINUING PHALANGIST-LEFTIST ANIMOSITY, AND GOL PARALYSIS IN DEALING EFFECTIVELY WITH THIS COUNTRY'S ACUTE PROBLEMS (E.G., PALESTINIANS, LAW AND ORDER, AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT) IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO CONTINUE.

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